

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 433, 436, and 439; that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order on these nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The eyes of history are on the Senate today. If the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline comes online, as it is on the verge of doing, the odds of Russian tanks rolling into Ukraine increase dramatically. We have imposed sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline with bipartisan unity. We can do it again.

If Russian tanks roll into Kiev, who in this Chamber wants that on their conscience?

We need to stop Russia from invading Ukraine, and the only way to do it is by imposing sanctions on Nord Stream 2. We did that 2 years ago. We overwhelmingly passed bipartisan sanctions that President Trump signed into law.

It is worth explaining why these two are linked.

We are all reading in the newspaper—and my friend from Virginia and I have sat in briefings, classified and public briefings—that over 100,000 Russian troops are massed on the Ukraine border. The administration declassified its own projections that an invasion of Ukraine is imminent and could come as soon as January or February of next year. This disaster is the direct result of a political mistake made by Joe Biden.

What does the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline have to do with Russia's invading Ukraine?

Well, here is a little bit of ancient history. In the year 2014, Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine.

Why?

He did it because he has said that he considers the dissolution of the Soviet Union to be the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 21st century, and his grand ambition is to recreate the Soviet Union—by force.

A reassembled Soviet Union would be a profound threat to the safety of all Americans. We spent decades with a dangerous Soviet Union. In 2014, Putin invaded Ukraine—he invaded Crimea—but he stopped. He didn't go through all of Ukraine.

Why did he stop?

He stopped because Russian natural gas, to get to Europe, goes through Ukraine. The pipelines go through Ukraine.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, may I invoke regular order? This is not a response to any of these three nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the request?

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

There is nothing in regular order that limits my ability to explain my view on this topic.

So, apparently, the Democrats don't want to talk about Joe Biden's gift to Russia and Putin that has set up the tanks on the border of Ukraine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. CRUZ. Is the Chair refusing to let me speak?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate has a scheduled vote. You see that Members have made their way to the floor. We have a lot of business to take care of, as you see.

Mr. CRUZ. And, just a moment ago, the Chair granted unanimous consent that that time be extended until this unanimous consent request was concluded. That is the pending UC that was granted.

If Senator KAINE or the Chair wants to silence me because you don't want to hear what is happening in Ukraine, you can try to do that.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, we have no interest in silencing Senator CRUZ. In fact, the Democrats agreed to allow Senator CRUZ to present his amendment on Nord Stream 2 last week, and it was blocked by Republican colleagues.

I have made a request for unanimous consent about two Ambassadors to the Americas and about someone who needs to attend a nuclear nonproliferation conference and lead the delegation from the United States. It happens once every 5 years, and it is coming up.

The Senator is allowed to speak about Nord Stream 2 for as long as he wants, but he shouldn't interrupt a UC for these three individuals to give a speech that he has given many times and that he is going to continue to give many times, and I am sure we are all going to hear it many times.

I would like a ruling on my request for unanimous consent on these three nominees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I object. And the Chair and the Democrats are hiding from the truth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I yield the floor.

VOTE ON ROLLINS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rollins nomination?

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 486 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden
Heinrich	Peters	

NAYS—50

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

(Ms. STABENOW assumed the Chair.)

(Ms. ROSEN assumed the Chair.)

The VICE PRESIDENT. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50.

The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative, and the nomination is confirmed.

The nomination was confirmed.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will immediately be notified of the Senate's actions.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 482, Michael D. Smith, of Virginia, to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Charles E. Schumer, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Patrick J. Leahy, John W. Hickenlooper, Jon Ossoff, Richard J. Durbin, Jeff Merkley, Benjamin L. Cardin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Mark Kelly, Kyrsten Sinema, Joe Manchin III, Edward J. Markey, Richard Blumenthal, Jack Reed, Raphael G. Warnock, Jeanne Shaheen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Michael D. Smith, of Virginia, to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 60, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 487 Ex.]

YEAS—60

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Padilla
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Romney
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Capito	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Cassidy	Manchin	Tillis
Collins	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Cornyn	Merkley	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warren
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wicker
Feinstein	Ossoff	Wyden

NAYS—39

Barrasso	Hawley	Portman
Blackburn	Hoeven	Risch
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Braun	Inhofe	Rubio
Cotton	Johnson	Sasse
Cramer	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lee	Shelby
Daines	Lummis	Sullivan
Ernst	Marshall	Thune
Fischer	McConnell	Toomey
Grassley	Moran	Tuberville
Hagerty	Paul	Young

NOT VOTING—1

Sanders

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). On this vote, the yeas are 60, the nays are 39.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Michael D. Smith, of Virginia, to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the confirmation of the Smith nomination scheduled for 5:15 p.m. instead occur at 6:45 p.m.; that upon disposition of the Smith nomination, the Senate resume legislative session and that all time in relation to S.J. Res. 29 be expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Therefore, for the information of Senators, there will be two rollcall votes beginning at 6:45 p.m.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, yesterday, Chicago reported its first case of the new coronavirus variant, Omicron. Our State's health officials predicted this day would come; it did. They are actively preparing for additional cases.

The World Health Organization has identified it as a variant of concern. It has the potential for increased transmissibility and could possibly—I underline “possibly”—evade some protections from existing vaccines.

But as we begin to learn about this variant, some hopeful signs have emerged. On Sunday, Dr. Fauci described early data on the severity of Omicron as “encouraging.” Additionally, today, we received preliminary findings that patients are better protected against Omicron with a third Pfizer dose.

And while it is still too soon to draw any definitive conclusions—too soon—what is clear is that the historic investments we have made—the Senate and President Biden—these investments in public health are paying off.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan—which we passed earlier this year on, sadly, a partisan rollcall without a single Republican vote—America is more prepared. That rescue package not only funded production and distribution of lifesaving vaccines; it paved the way for public health officials to detect and track new variants like Omicron. It provided more than a billion dollars toward expanding and accelerating genomic sequencing, the process that allows us to analyze how the coronavirus is evolving and spreading in realtime, so we can respond.

Thanks to this investment today, America is sequencing roughly 80,000 virus samples a week. Before President Biden took office, we were sequencing fewer than 3,000; now, 80,000 a week. That has made a world of difference when it comes to tracking the spread of a variant.

In less than 2 weeks since the variant was discovered in South Africa, it has been identified in at least 19 States in addition to Illinois.

As we await more data on the risk Omicron poses to the public, here are three things we know. First—and it bears repeating—the best protection is to get vaccinated. Ninety-five percent of Americans are eligible, and 70 percent have already gotten at least one shot. Within days, we will hit the impressive milestone of 200 million Americans getting fully vaccinated. We need to continue to promote this incredible safety tool, and that means booster shots as well.

Second, America must continue to support the global vaccine campaign. As I have said before, COVID doesn't know borders. As long as it is circulating across the globe, the risk of virus mutation growing stronger and

roaring back into the United States continues to be real.

Fortunately, the Biden administration has already taken important steps to address global vaccine inequality and get more shots to low-income countries. Just this week, USAID announced a \$400 million investment in a new global vaccine access program to deliver vaccines to remote parts of the world.

I just got off the phone with Dr. Atul Gawande, a surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a prolific author, and a man who is very insightful. He has agreed to step forward and to work with Administrator Samantha Power at USAID. He is the right person for this job at this very moment. So I encourage my colleagues to let him move off the calendar and into the job as quickly as possible. We need his expertise at USAID.

The third point I would like to make is that we need to build on the American Rescue Plan's investment in public health. Effective public health systems are like smoke detectors: They can alert us to deadly dangers long before they threaten.

At the start of this pandemic, America's public health system had been ignored and underfunded for years. That is the reason why we proposed nearly \$10 billion in the Build Back Better plan, which we are currently working on, to improve laboratory capacity, disease detection, the workforce, and public health preparedness. This funding will fortify our public health system at a time when it is absolutely necessary.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Mr. President, on a related matter, just before Thanksgiving, the House of Representatives passed the Build Back Better Act. It is one of the most pro-family pieces of legislation in modern history.

For nearly 50 years, the wealthy in America have gotten richer while the middle class has been squeezed. Build Back Better is about restoring fairness.

Four years ago, when the Republicans had their chance to use the reconciliation process, they really identified their highest priority: tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans. They continue to hold to the philosophy that if you give tax breaks to wealthy people, eventually people who are in the middle-income categories—working families—will start to see some benefits coming their way. I couldn't disagree more.

I believe investing in working families in America has always been the best investment. These are families with kids who are destined for college and even better jobs if we invest in those families and give them a fighting chance. The wealthy are going to do just fine by themselves, and they are doing pretty well, I might add.

We have got to make sure that this Build Back Better Act, which President Biden supports, really focuses on working families. And that is why the